

THE RELIGIOUS IMPROVE-
MENT OF HARVEST.

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED, JULY 27th.

1766.

By Nathaniel Hooker, A. M. &

Pastor of a Church in HARTFORD.

"Ye Forests bend, ye Harvests wave, to Him ;
Breathe your wild Song into the Reaper's Heart,
As Home he goes beneath the joyous Moon."

THOMSON.

H A R T F O R D :

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To the Reader.

AS this Discourse was originally and entirely designed for the Edification of the unlearned and laborious Part of Mankind, who get their daily Bread in the Sweat of their brows; I presume, it may claim Exemption from the severest Animadversions of Criticks, and the Censures of those, who call themselves Men of Taste: However, to engage the Candor of the Reader, I will just mention two or three Things.

Imprimis. I beg Leave to make use of a certain Phrase, canonic'd by long Custom, viz. "That it was wrote without any Thought or Design of being printed." This, you will say, is stale, trite and Thread-bare; but, stale as it is, I don't believe this is the last Time it will be used; nor have I less Right to use it, than any of the Thousand Sermon-Publishers, that have wrote before me; and, in Fact, if there ever was any Thing worthy the Reader's Consideration in the Assertion, it is as good now as it was in the Days of Yore; and if there never was any Thing worthy the Reader's Consideration, what a Pack of Dunces have most of our Preface Writers been?

Item. I have the old Plea for Mercy to make use of, "The Importance of Friends."—However, I don't insist much upon this—treat it as you please—

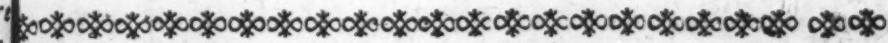
Item, and especially: Among all the Sermons that ever I wrote, or preach'd, there scarce ever was one begotten, conceiv'd and born; that is to say, composed and wrote, in less Time, and in more Hurry, than this; it being the Production of the End of a Week, that had been fill'd up with greater bodily Infirmity, and hypochondriacal Lowness, than I had experienc'd for two Years before.—And indeed the Marks of Haste are visible through the whole—but it pleas'd my People, and they desired to see it in Print, and accordingly have it. And any one that doesn't know that a hasty Performance is often more popular than some more elaborate Composition, is welcome to make what Observation he thinks proper.



N. H.



The religious Improvement of H A R V E S T.



J E R E M I A H, V. xxiv.

— *He reserveth unto us the appointed Weeks of the HARVEST.*

S the most of you are Husbandmen, who have continual Opportunity to view the Power, and Goodness of GOD, through the Vicissitudes of the Year, in the Production of the Fruits of the Earth ; so, I trust, you are not dispos'd to pass over those Displays of the divine Perfections, in a heedless Manner, as those who regard not the Work of the Lord, and consider not the Operation of his Hands : ^a Such Stupidity, such a Disregard of the divine Hand, stands condemned by the Practice even of the brutal World ; therefore, such a Contempt of GOD, discovering itself in his antient People, is thus spoken of, *The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib* ; but *Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider.* ^b — You have, in general, been engaged in the Business of ingathering the Staff of Life—been engaged in that Branch of Husbandry, from whence our SAVIOUR gathers a Representation of the Conduct of the Angels, at

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^a *Isaiah v. 12.*

^b *Ibid. i. 13.*

the last Day, in gathering the Elect to Glory, and casting the Wicked into unquenchable Fire; and while your Sickles are in your Hands—while, in the Sweat of your Brows, you gather the Sheaves,—while you look back upon the Field, and view that, which Yesterday was loaded with the bearded Grain, rustling in the Wind and inviting the Reaper's Hand, To-Day, disrob'd, and only a Tract of useless Stubble—I say, while you do these Things, I hope that you do not disregard the Finger of the DEITY, that you are not without religious Reflections, when the Occasion is (or might be) so fruitful of them.

Whatever Pretensions to real Godliness Men may make ; if they can pass through the various Scenes of Harvest, without religious Observations, and Affections, excited, and enlivened thereby; if they, for Days together, cut the Stalk, and bind the Sheaf, gather the ripe Grain, and prepare it for the Garner, without one serious Thought of the GOD that has caus'd the Seed to spring up, and strung their Nerves with Strength to go through the laborious, yet joyful, Task of gathering it in, without one serious Reflection upon *his Bounty* in the clean ripe Grain, and *his Frowns* in the blasted, or upon his Wisdom and Power in bringing it to Perfection ; there is much Ground to suspect the Vanity of their Pretensions : It is certain, at least, that they have but little Soul-Converse, and daily Communion with GOD.—It is indeed profitable, and delightful to the Christian, to live with GOD, and converse with Him in the ordinary Concerns of Life; whereas tis the Character of the *Wicked that GOD is not in all his Thoughts.* And to assist you in this profitable and delightful Employment, as far as it has respect

to the present Season, I have chosen the Words read,
He reserveth unto us the appointed Weeks of the Harvest.
And now, without any Consideration of the Context, or particular Explication of the Words themselves, I shall take Occasion to entertain you with a practical Discourse upon the *religious Improvement of Harvest*, not prescribing any particular Method to myself.

Many Months ago, you went forth as a Sower, upon the same Ground over which you now pass, as a Reaper; you then threw your Grain by Handfulls upon the furrowed and prepared Soil, trusting that, according to the ordinary Course of Nature, you should receive your own again, with great Increase; you left it to spring forth in the genial Womb of Nature; nor has the ALMIGHTY disappointed your Hopes; he preserved it thro' the Winter; and tho' he did not order so warm and steady a Covering of Snow, as you, at sometimes, were ready to wish, yet He has ordered all Things so as to ward off all Fears of a Dearth. The Power of Vegetation, in his Hand, has produced the full Ear; and the kind Rayes of the Sun have ripened the milky Berry into yellow Grain. What Wisdom is here! Who can comprehend it?—What Power divine, what infinite Skill has watch'd by Day and by Night, thro' the changing Seasons of the Year, so that you now receive the Seed you committed to the Earth, an Hundred Fold?—Here you have an Emblem of the Resurrection of the Body, and 'tis from the very Appearance you have had before your Eyes, that the Apostle fetches Illustration of the Resuscitation of the human Race at the End of the World: *But, says he, some Men will say, how are the Dead raised? and with what Body do they come? thou Fool, that which thou lowest is not quickened, except it dye.*

dye. *And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that Body that shall be, but bare Grain, it may chance of Wheat, or some other Grain, but GOD giveth it a Body as it has pleased him.*^a When you see what divine Power has produced, what a Profusion of the same Sort of Grain you sowed, supported by stately Stalks, and every Grain defended by its peculiar Husk; you may gather a Specimen of that Power of God, which can raise a spiritual, immortal and glorious Body from these earthly, frail and rotting Carcasses: He can raise us with Powers exalted, refined and fitted for his Use in our new and glorious State.— You committed the Seed to the Ground, trusting that God would preserve it, cause it to spring up, and deliver it again into your Hands with rich Improvement. And can't you, in like Manner, commit your own Body or the Bodies of your dearest Relatives to the Dust of the Earth, trusting in God, that he will reanimate them in his own Time, that they shall again rise fair, and improved, and better fitted for your MAKER's Service; that you shall *in your Flesh see GOD?*^b— 'Twas no more in your Power, to make one Seed, you put into the Earth, spring up and yield its Fruits, than tis to call a putrifying Corpse, from the Dust of Death, into Life and Activity.—Let your Faith in a blessed Resurrection then gather Strength and Consolation from this Consideration, that though you may long lye mouldering in the Dust, *and, after your Skin, Worms destroy this Body*, yet the same Power that rais'd such stately Ranks of Corn from the Seed, bursting and dying in the Furrows, can raise from Dust and Putrefaction, a Body *fashion'd like unto CHRIST's glorious Body.*

^c 'Tis

^a 1 Cor. xv. 35—39. ^b Job xix. 26.

'Tis from this Increase and Redundance of Grain, proportioned to what you sowed, that you have a Similitude of the Produce of Gospel-Truth in a gracious Soul. Behold, says our Saviour, a Sower went forth to sow, and, when he sowed, some Seeds fell by the Way-side, and the Fowles came and devoured it up, some fell upon stoney Places, where they had not much Earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no Deepness of Earth; and when the Sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no Root, they withered away. And some fell among Thorns; and the Thorns sprung up and choaked them; but others fell into good Ground, and brought forth Fruit, some an Hundred Fold, some Sixty Fold, some Thirty-Fold.^f He explains this afterwards, and says,^g He that received Seed into the good Ground, is he that beareth the Word, and understandeth it, which also beareth Fruit, and bringeth forth some an Hundred-Fold, some Sixty, some Thirty. Now, my Brethren, when you view that Profusion with which GOD has rewarded your Labour in tilling and sowing your Land, when you take Notice of that large Income he has given you, for that small Measure of Seed you bestowed upon the Ground; the Parable suggests an Enquiry into the Increase of Grace in your Hearts, and the Fruitfulness of your Lives; whether you have brought forth Fruit to GOD, from all the divine manuring and Cultivation that has been bestowed upon you proportionable to the Produce of the Seed you cast into your Land. I doubt that the most of us must take Shame to ourselves, upon the Result of such an Enquiry, that our Hearts have been so poorly prepared for the Reception of the Seed of GOD's Word, that, instead of an hundred Fold, but very few will be found that have brought

^f Mat. xiii. 13—9.^g Ver. 23.

bro't forth Sixty or Thirty.—Christians will generally find Matter of Humiliation in this Case, for indeed *the Children of this World are wiser in their Generation, than the Children of Light:*^h The Men of this World take more Care to fit their Ground to receive Seed, and bring forth a Crop, than Christians do to fit their Hearts for the Reception of divine Truth in the Sanctuary.. Among the Professors of Religion, there are too many stony-ground Hearers, who turn out but temporary Believers ; and too many so immersed, either in the Cafes, or Pleasures of Life, that the Word of God to them, is like Seed sown among Thorns ; but where is the Christian among you all, that is as careful to fit his Heart to bring forth an hundred Fold, from the Seed of God's Word, as you are to fit your Ground to bring forth a plentiful Harvest ? Was this generally the Case among professing Christians, we should find more Vigilance and Circumspection in their Walk, and more Devotion, Life and Vigour in their religious Services ; Ministers would be more encouraged, Churches more frequented, and Ordinances better attended.—You blame the Sluggard, and that justly, saying with the Wise Man, *He that sleepeth in Harvest is a Son that causeth Shame:*ⁱ But in what Respects is your Conduct more justifiable, or commendable than his, when you take no Care to improve spiritual Seed-Time and Harvest, let the Seed be lost, and sleep when you ought to be reaping the Fruit of past Advantages ?—Let the wicked and careless, who have hitherto despised God's Word, sow to themselves in Righteousness and reap in Mercy ; let them break up their Fallow-Ground ; for it is Time to seek the Lord, till He come and reign Righteousness ;

for they have plowed Wickedness, they have reaped Iniquity, and eaten the Fruit of Lies.^k Let those worldly-minded Christians, that suffer the Briars and Thorns of Pleasure or worldly Care to over-run their Hearts, and prevent Profit from the Word; let those, I say, likewise break up their Fallow-Ground, and sow not among Thorns.^l You never pretend to cast your Seed-Corn into the Brush and Briars of the Wilderness; no; you clear all them away; and when you have done that, you don't think your Ground prepared till plowed, softened and mellowed. But how different is your Conduct in spiritual Matters?—You offer God a Heart entirely unprepared for the Seed of the Word; 'tis a perfect Wilderness of Briars and Thorns; a Swamp undrain'd and un-clear'd, on Account of foul Lusts, carnal Security, Indolence, Stupidity, Inattention and Irresolution.—Is this a fit Place for that Seed to spring up in? Is this to receive the *ingrafted Word with Meekness*? When this World was a Paradise, Man's Heart resembled it; but as soon as Sin transformed the Beauty and Fruitfulness of the Earth into Barranness, Thorns and Briars, it turn'd the Heart of Man into a State that resembles the Ruins of a once delicate and magnificent City, *Thorns come up in the Palaces, and Nettles and Brambles in the Fortress thereof*; it is a *Habitation for Dragons, and a Court for Owls*; a shocking Place to cast Seed into, under any Expectation of a Harvest, till there has been much Work and Labour in preparing it.

You find much Labour and Toil in gathering in your Harvest—'tis a Laborious Undertaking, usually not accomplished without much Sweat and Expence of Strength. The Providence of God has order'd

^k Hosea x. 12.

^l Jeremiah iv. 3.

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order'd this Work, with us, in a sultry Season of the Year, when the Sun (indeed is not quite so vertical as a few Weeks before, but) darts his Rays in the most fervid Manner, causing Labour abroad to be attended with more Faintness and Fatigue, than in any Part of the Year. Tho' the Sun, by his scorching Beams, hath exhal'd the Moisture of the Corn, and ripened it for the Reaper; yet he withholds not then his penetrating Rays in Compassion to him. At this Season, the Beasts in their Pastures, when the unclouded Sun mounts towards the Meridian, forsake their Food, and seek Shelter from the Noon-Tide Heat, in any Shade that presents, there they stretch themselves, and enjoy Repose; and the Fowls skulk from the burning Air, into some neighbouring Hedge, and indulge their Indolence; while Man, the Lord of this lower World and Master of the brutal Creation, is called forth to gather his Bread:—If the Season be lost, pale Famine stares him in the Face—When Harvest erects her yellow Head, tho' the Sun-Beams scorch, 'tis Man's Time to gather the Provision of the Year; and though his Land be a *Land of Wheat and Barley*, and God is pleas'd to fill him with the finest of the *Wheat*, yet in sweat and Toil must he get it.—See! the File of Reapers, basking in the Sun, and bent to Labour, their Blood flames in their Countenance, and their small Remains of Dress swim in Sweat, while their parch'd Mouths and exhausted Spirits require repeated Draughts of cooling Liquids.—And is their Nothing instructive in the toilsome Scene?—Can't you feel in this the Curse of God on fallen Man, and the hateful Nature of Sin?—I think you can't have a more lively, (and, one would think, a more humbling) Sense of that Denunciation, Gen. iii. 17, 19.

Because

Because thou hast harkned unto the Voice of thy Wife, and hast eaten of the Tree which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it : Cursed is the Ground for thy Sake ; in Sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the Days of thy Life.—And in the Sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat Bread, till thou return unto the Ground. Hear this, thou laborious Husbandman ! and consider the hateful Cause of all thy Toil and Fatigue.—You may learn your Apostacy in your daily Labour, that you are a true Son of Adam, and inherit the Curse denounced on him.—You may read your Maker's Displeasure against Sin as you reap or mow.—God, not only, as a Token of his Displeasure against a guilty People, cuts off the Staff of Bread, sends a Blast upon their standing Corn, and disappoints the Hopes of the Sower ; He not only commissions the Worm to sap the Root, to undermine every Prospect of Plenty, and bring a Famine of Bread ; but the Toil and Labour, the Sweat and Fatigue of gathering and procuring Food, when the Land yields plentiful Increase, is a standing Monument of his Hatred of Sin, the first Sin, the Sin of the World ;—and exhibits as indelible Marks of a universal Apostacy as outward Eruptions of inward Leprosy. O ! let Sin then, be the Object of your Hatred, and learn more of its malignant Nature, from your daily Labour.

But, amidst all the Toils you are subjected to, your Ability to labour, demands grateful Acknowledgments to the GOD in whose Hand your Breath is, ... whose are all your Ways. The Frame and Constitution of animal Nature is such, that, in the healthy Body, unless the Strength be in an imprudent, and excessive Manner exhausted, Nature exerts itself, and quickly recovers its Vigour and Comfort,

Comfort, by the proper Refreshments of Food and Sleep.—A Heart free from Anxiety, a Body unmolested by Diseases, and a Nature moderately fatigued with Labour, disposes to the most refreshing and recruiting Sleep; so true is that Observation of the Wise Man, *The Sleep of the labouring Man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the Abundance of the Rich will not suffer him to sleep.*^m Though the Ground universally bears the Marks of the divine Curse, and the Husbandman feels the divine Displeasure against an apostate World, in the Labour and Toil with which he gets his Bread from the Earth; yet the Bounty of our heavenly Father, in making abundant Provision for the Recruit and Comfort of our weary Natures, ought to be gratefully acknowledged: With what Appetite and Relish can the healthy Labourer receive the Bounties of Providence! and what immediate Recruit of Spirit do they afford!—*Give unto the Lord, Glory and Strength, Give unto the Lord the Glory due unto his Name.*—

That Soundness of Limbs, and comfortable Measure of Health, which enables you to swing your Scythe, or to draw your Sickle, is God's Gift; it's a Gift, whereby you are distinguish'd from many of your Fellow Men, and from some of your Neighbours:—While your Nerves are brac'd, your Sinews strung with Strength and Firmness for the laborious Task, others can see, and be sensible, that their Corn is, as it were, calling for the Reaper: but bodily Infirmitiy incapacitates them to put forth their Hand to the Business.—Some are, with hard Sickness, confined to their Beds; a burning Fever prays upon their Nature, or accute Pain torments

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their Limbs, and their Cares for future Bread, are swallowed up in the more important Concerns of another World.—Others, not subjected to so close Confinement, are still unable to assist in the Work of the Season : Though they stalk about upon the Face of the Earth, yet they find Flesh, Strength and Spirits decaying—they groan under the Miseries of an impaired Constitution, and are subjected to Tremors, and exquisitely disagreeable Sensations, upon the least Attempt to Labour, while perhaps, the unhappy Men are ridiculed by the Robust, for their very Misfortunes, and their Weakness is stiled their Laziness.—Others, by some sudden and unexpected Accident, have had their Flesh sorely bruise'd, or their Bones broken, and are doom'd to a long Imprisonment in their Chambers. Think on such Persons as these with Compassion, when you find yourself endowed with Strength equal to the Business of the Season; and the Call of Providence. Tho' you feel yourself, at the close of the Day, weary with your Labour, yet, from the sweet Sleep of the labouring Man, you can rise fresh as the Morning, and enter anew upon the necessary Task. These Things call for Affections, and Expressions of Gratitude to the God of our Life, and for sympathetic Kindness to the Sick, the Weak and the Wounded, causing you to *comfort the Feeble-minded, to support the Weak, and to have Compassion one of another.*

When you pass through a Field of Corn, you find not only useful Grain, but unprofitable Weeds, which spring up with the Corn, and mix its Seed herewith ; you indeed took the utmost Care to procure pure and clear Seed, but you find frequently Tares growing up with the Wheat.—Now, the Improvement that you are to make, the Reflec-

tion that occurs, upon this Observation is given you by our Saviour in Matt. xiii. Chap. where he compares a large Field to the World, and the Church, and the Tares that spring up with the Wheat, to the Hypocrites that have a Place in the same Church with Believers, and the wicked that have a Residence in the same World with the Godly and Pious; *The Kingdom of Heaven*, says he, *is likened unto a Man, that sowed good Seed in his Field; but while Men slept, the Enemy came and sowed Tares among the Wheat, and went his Way; but when the Blade was sprung up, and brought forth Fruit, then appeared the Tares also.* So the Servants of the Housholder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good Seed in thy Field? From whence then hath it Tares? He said unto them, an Enemy hath done this. The Servants said unto him, wilt thou that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay: lest while ye gather up the Tares, ye root up also the Wheat with them. Let both grow together until the Harvest: and in the Time of the Harvest, I will say to the Reapers, gather ye together first the Tares, and bind them in Bundles to burn them; but gather the Wheat into my Barn. In explaining this, in the same Chap. our LORD says, *He that soweth the good Seed, is the Son of Man, the Field is the World, the good Seed are the good Children of the Kingdom, but the Tares are the Children of the Wicked One; the Enemy that sowed them is the Devil; the Harvest is the End of the World, and the Reapers are the Angels.* Here is a Field opened for you to spiritualize all the Process of your Work.—After all the Pains that Men take to sow their Land with good and pure Seed, they will usually find some Tares, and unprofitable Weeds; Job's Imprecation will frequently, in some Measurs come upon them, *Let Thistles grow instead of Wheat, and Cockle instead of Barley.*

Barley. So the Seed which our LORD JESUS CHRIST disperses in the World, that great Field, is good; but it becomes in many Instances, a Savour of Death unto Death. The Trash that grows among your Corn, is void either of Profit or Service to you, and thus unprofitable to Mankind, unserviceable to the Great LORD of the World, are many that sustajn a Place in the World, and enjoy the Manurings of his Sanctuary—like the barren Fig-Tree in the Vine-yard, they but cumber the Ground. *By the Blessing of the Upright, the City is exalted; but the Wicked are a Reproach to the People among whom they reside, and "when they perish, there is shouting.* The Tares possess a Place in the Field with the Wheat, and receive Nourishment from the fertile Earth, in common with it; they enjoy the same Rain, the same Sunshine, and the same Soil, and yet are good for Nothing; that which serves to render the Wheat more fit for Man's Use, and ripen it into proper Substance for the richest Bread, renders the other more rank and noxious. So, though the Wicked enjoy the same Means of Grace, are supported by the same Providence, and have a Place in the same Sanctuary with the Godly; yet, from the Vileness of their Nature, they but contract new Guilt, become more ripe for Hell, and are *treasuring up Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of GOD.*—This Consideration will naturally suggest some such Enquiry as this, into your spiritual State—Here I view Tares, Cockle, and unprofitable Weeds among the Wheat, as I reap it; and to these do I find the hypocritical Part of professing Christians likened in Scripture: But alas! don't I, who enjoy the ordinary Gifts of Providence,

the Offers of Pardon, and the Means of Grace equal to any of my christian Neighbours, make the same Use of them, as these Tares do of the Rain of Heaven, and the Fainness of the Soil, among this Wheat? Should the Reapers now come to the general Harvest of the World, should not I be found as far from being an Honor to God, and as unfit for his heavenly Garner, as these Weeds are for the Service and Nourishment of Man? — Nor may it here be improper, after having had so much View to our SAVIOUR's Parable in this Discourse, to hint a Word of Reproof that the Business of Harvest affords, to such Persons as have embraced that unscriptural Opinion, *That there is, or may be, a pure Church in the World, by the Separation of true Believers from secret Hypocrites.* It is not agreeable to our SAVIOUR, that Men attempt any such Thing as purging the Church of such as are *inwardly* hypocritical, and insincere in their Profession, notwithstanding there is Provision made, for removing such, as, by their *outwardly* scandalous Behaviour, are a Dishonor to their Profession—*Let both grow together, says He, until the Harvest;*—and what he means by the Harvest is expressed, *The Harvest is the End of the World.*—There is a Set of Men in the World, distinguish'd by their Fondness of judging, and deciding the spiritual State of professing Christians; and have even arrogated to themselves, a Right of determining the Sincerity, or Insincerity of their Professions: Hence they have thought themselves warranted to reprobate, and anathematize particular Churches, to which they have been joined by solemn Covenant; to stand aloof from them, saying, We are holier than Ye; to separate from them, and erect others, whose Doors are barr'd against Hypocrisy—Now, as the

Sluggard

Sluggard is directed to go to the Ant, and learn Wisdom, so let these Men, having carefully perused the xiith. of Matt. go to the Corn-Field, and get Confutation.

But it is Time that the Discourse make a Transition to the *Goodness of GOD*, in the Production of our Bread-Corn, and our Obligations to Gratitude to him therefor.—When you take Notice of your Stacks of Wheat and Rye, and therein plentiful Provision for the ensuing Year, acknowledge God's Goodness and Agency therein, and bless and praise his holy Name, Your Dependance is entirely upon God for the Staff of Life; *He reserveth unto us the appointed Weeks of the Harvest.*—So plain are the Footsteps of Almighty Power, infinite Wisdom, and diffusive Goodness, in the Courses of divine Providence; so conspicuous and apparent the Finger of that wise Being who rules over ALL, and provides for ALL, that *any Man may see it, Men may behold it afar off;* and though Men take different Paths in Life, are actuated by different Principles, and propose different Ends, yet they may all descry the Superintendancy of the ALMIGHTY RULER, and the Beneficence of the universal PARENT.—But no Station in Life, gives a Man a better Prospect, or brighter Discovery of the Sovereignty, Power and Kindness of God, than that which the Husbandman fills:—While others trust in their Skill and Dexterity, to accomplish their Designs, He has ever presented to his View, his Dependance on God.—The Warrior, going to *jeopard his Life*, is tempted to depend upon the Number or Valour of his Troops: And the Seaman, when Clouds are condensing, the Wind gathers Strength, and the Tempest rages, hopes in the Strength of his Ship, and the Number and Experience

perience of his Mariners: The Craftsmen of every Kind, depend upon their Art and Contrivance for Subsistence;—but the Husbandman lives, in the most sensible Manner, Day by Day, upon GOD.—Is the Rain withheld, so that his Land is parch'd with Droughth, the Vegetables languishing and dying away, and the Oxen lowing for Food? In short, is *a fruitful Land turn'd into Barranness, and the Water-Springs into dry Ground?*—there is none but GOD to look to; the whole Village can't raise a Cloud, nor can the united Power of all Mankind, unstop the Bottles of Heaven.—Do the Rains descend in Judgment, threatening to sweep or blast the Food of Man and Beast before them, and presenting a melancholy Prospect of approaching Dearth and Trouble? There is none but the *Father of the Rain*, and He, who hath *begotten the Drops of the Dew*—none but He, who is perfect in Knowledge, and of whose wondrous Works, are the ballancing of the Clouds, that can avert the impending Evil.—Do the Locusts, and other destructive Insects of the Air, come in Swarms? or an Army of Reptiles invade the Corn at the Root?—they come as Destruction from the ALMIGHTY, *A Fire devoureth before them, and behinde them a Flame burneth*^o; none but GOD, to whom belongs every Insect of the Earth, as well as *all the Cattle upon a thousand Hills*, can cause them to retreat: But He can exert his Power for the instant Deliverance of the Distressed; as He did, when He turned *a mighty strong West Wind, which took away the Locusts of Egypt, and cast them into the Red Sea, so that there remained not one Locust in all the Land of Egypt.*^p Tho' the Inhabitants of a Country in general, are interested in these Evils, yet they primarily, and more immediately

^o Joel ii. 3.^p Exodus x. 20.

immediately affect those, whose chief Business in Life is, like their Father Adam's, " to till the Ground." While other Men are insensible of, or have not Opportunity to view, the Hand of God, in ordering the Seasons, for the Benefit of the Earth, the Husbandman lives in continual Dependance upon God, under the best Advantage to be sensible of it, and peculiarly obligated to view and study, to praise and adore the Glory of God, in making Provision for the Wants of Men.—The Changes and Vicissitudes of the Year, presenting to Man their respective Fruits, are agreeable to the Ordinance, and Appointment of God ; for He ordained the Perpetuity of the revolving Seasons, after the Destruction of the Old World, *While the Earth remaineth, Seed-Time and Harvest, Cold and Heat, and Summer and Winter, and Day and Night shall not cease.*⁴ The Time of Harvest is represented, and frequently spoken of, as being a Time of rejoicing ; yea, of so great rejoicing, when the Harvest is plentiful, that the Ground, the inanimate Soil itself, is set forth as Shouting in the divine Beneficence to Man. *Thou crownest, says the Psalmist, exulting with pious Gratitude, the Year with thy Goodness, and thy Paths drop Fatness*—*the little Hills rejoice on every Side*—*the Vallies also are covered over with Corn ; they shout for Joy, they also sing : To this grateful Joy does our SAVIOUR allude, when he metaphorically speaks of the Gospel Church, and the Ingathering of Converts ; Lift up your Eyes, says He, and look on the Fields, for they are already White to Harvest ; and He that reapeth, receiveth Wages, and gathereth Fruit unto eternal Life ; that both he that soweth, and he that reapeth, may rejoice together.*⁵—And to this Joy of Harvest

⁴ Gen. viii. 22. ⁵ Psalm lxv. 11—13. ⁶ John iv. 36.

Harvest likewise, does the Prophet Isaiah compare the Joy that shall be in the Midst of Affliction, by the Revelation and Discovery of the MESSIAH—
*They joy, says he, before thee, according to the Joy of Harvest, and as Men rejoice, when they divide the Spoil.*¹ But how is it proper for Christians, for Men acquainted with the Character of the true GOD, to manifest this Joy?—not surely in Riot and Luxury—not in excessive sensual Gratifications, or a disolute Frolick: But they should rejoice in GOD, whose Bounty is the Source of all their Plenty. We find a Direction in this Matter, in the cxlvii Psalm, V. 1. *Praise ye the LORD : For it is good to sing Praises unto our GOD.* The Call to Praise is repeated in the 12th Verse, *Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem : Praise thy GOD, O Zion.* And one particular Reason why we should render Him this Praise, is given, V. 14. *He maketh Peace in thy Borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the Wheat.*—God appointed, to his ancient People, a solemn, annual Feast, at Harvest, wherein they were to praise his Name, for the Produce of their Land. Deut. xvi. 13, 14. *Thou shalt observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven Days, after that thou hast gathered in thy Corn and thy Wine ; and thou shalt rejoice in thy Feast, thou, and thy Son, and thy Daughter, and thy Man-Servant, and thy Maid-Servant, and the Levite, and the Stranger, and the Fatherless, and the Widow, that are within thy Gates ; Seven Days shalt thou keep a solemn Feast unto the LORD thy GOD, in the Place which the LORD thy GOD shall choose ; because thy GOD shall bless thee in all thy Increase.*—While you learn from your Toil, the Fall of Man, and the Curse of GOD upon the Ground, and im-

¹ *Isaiah ix. 3.*

prove it to Humiliation ; view his Goodness in the Productions of the Field, and praise the Name of Him, who opens the Store-House of his Bounty, to supply your Wants.

In various different Respects, do the sacred Writers allude to the Business of Harvest ;—sometimes the joyful Season is set forth, as an Emblem of the Manifestation of the MESSIAH to a benighted World ; at other Times, the Reaper's Work is made Use of as a figurative Representation of the Exercise of God's fierce Anger, & tremendous Judgment upon a guilty People, or World. Joel iii. 13. *Put ye in the Sickle, for the Harvest is ripe ; come, get ye down, for the Press is full, the Fats overflow, for their Wickedness is great.* — Let the expressive, the striking Image, excite in you a Dread of the ALMIGHTY, and set Home the alarming Truth, *Though Hand join in Hand, the Wicked shall not be unpunished.* — Thus did the Vengeance of the ALMIGHTY, mow down the Inhabitants of the Antediluvian World, and of the Cities of the Plain, leaving only the Families of Noah and Lot, as the Gleanings of the Field.—Take Heed that ye offend not that GOD, who can mow down the Inhabitants of a Country, a Nation, or a World, as the Labourer does the Produce of the Field.

But to draw towards a Close, let the Great *Harvest, the End of the World** be had in View.—— The Field, that was lately burthen'd with the standing Corn, is now deprived of all her Pomp, and Glory ; instead of those unnumber'd Ears, rang'd in beautiful Order, which not long since saluted the Eye, we find the shorn Field, appearing as a spacious Waste. — So shall it be one Day, with this World :

* Prov. xvi. 5.

* Matt. xiii. 39.

World : I looked, says St. John, and behold, a white Cloud, and upon the Cloud one sat, like unto the Son of Man, having on his Head a golden Crown, and in his Hand a sharp Sickle. And another Angel came out of the Temple, crying with a loud Voice to him that sat on the Cloud, Thrust in thy Sickle and reap : for the Time is come for thee to reap ; for the Harvest of the Earth is ripe. And he that sat on the Cloud, thrust in his Sickle on the Earth : and the Earth was reaped. ^x A most important Period this ! the Righteous, qualified for Glory, and fit for their Master's Service, shall be gathered into his heavenly Garner ; and the Wicked, ripe for their different Destination, shall be cast into unquenchable Fire. Then, upon a Survey of this Globe, will there be the Appearance of a reaped Field. Alas ! how will the Cities set solitary, that were full of People ! — Then shall the great Lord of the Harvest, reap his greatest Revenue of Glory. Harvest crowns the Labour of the Husbandman, and he is then plentifully rewarded for all his Toil. With a View to this, was all his Labour in manuring and tilling his Land. — So, at the great and last Day, shall GOD receive the greatest Income of Glory, and CHRIST shall gather his own to himself : — In that Day shall He come to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. ^z — The redeemed of the LORD shall return to Zion, with Songs of eternal Praise and Joy. — To this glorious, and distinguished Period was the View of our blessed Redeemer, in all he has done, and suffered for his Church. — As the Husbandman plows, and sows, and then watches, and guards his Field, while the Grain is coming to Perfection, lest it be destroyed,

^x Rev. xiv. 14, 15, 16.^z 2 Thes. i. 10.

or damaged by the Beasts of the Field, that he may have Plenty at Harvest; so Christ has *purchased the Church with his own Blood*, watched it every Moment, and defended it, that the *Gates of Hell might not prevail against it*, that he might reap a large Revenue of Glory at the last Day.—Then shall he gather his Saints to himself in Heaven, there to reign with him *as Kings and Priests to GOD forever*—That Day shall proclaim the Triumphs of his Justice, and the unspeakable Riches of his Grace; shall display the Glory of his Wisdom, and demonstrate the Divinity of his Nature, in the Sight of an attending, admiring Universe.—Then likewise, shall the Redemption of God's Children be compleated: *When these Things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your Heads; for your Redemption draweth nigh.*^a At the Harvest, the Wheat is shelter'd, and secured from the Dangers it was exposed to while in the Field,—so, at the End of the World, shall the Righteous be brought to their Father's House, and be safely protected from every Danger that threatened them in the World. While the Corn stands in the Field, it is exposed to be blasted, cut short, or destroyed, by unseasonable Weather; rapacious Vermin may crop it while imperfect; or the Beasts of the Field may break through its Inclosure, trample on it, and devour it; but when it is gathered into the Garner, 'tis out of the Reach of these Evils:—So, when the Saints are admitted into a Mansion in their Father's House, they shall be free from all the Evils they are exposed to in the World. While in the World, the Enemies of their Souls are numerous and industrious, so that they had Need, while they

^a Luke xxi. 28.

they think they stand, to take Heed, lest they fall— their Danger is so great, that if they ever enter the Kingdom of Heaven, it will be with much Tribulation ; but, having escaped the Pollution there is in the World thro' Lust, and being arrived to the blissful Abodes reserved for such as overcome the World, they are out of the Reach of Dangers ; no more shall they have to conflict with Temptations or fear the Powers of Hell.—

Let us all, therefore, make it our Care, to lay in a good Foundation, against the Time to come : Let us seek the Favour of our Maker, and all necessary Qualifications for the heavenly Glory : Let us feel Grace to persevere in the Ways of Faith and Holiness to the Death, that we may, at the great Harvest-Day, come to the heavenly Garner, like as a SICKLE of CORN cometh in, in his Season. Job v. 26.

F I N I S.

